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ACCESS TO CURRENT AND OUTDATED INFORMATION ON EPA'S WEB SITE

1. **PURPOSE.** This document establishes EPA's policy for keeping information on the EPA public access Web site current, and providing access to useful information that is no longer current but is still valuable to the public as reference and/or background material. Undertaking these measures will improve the efficiency of EPA's Web site in general, as well as the efficiency of the Web site's search engine.
2. **AUDIENCE.** Office Directors and Regional equivalents, data owners, Web site managers and contractor employees who produce and maintain EPA Web sites.
3. **BACKGROUND.** How EPA presents information affects how the public perceives, understands and uses that information for environmental analysis, decision-making and educational purposes. Some information continues to reflect current EPA decisions and activities (i.e., remains relevant) for years. For example, several EPA regulations promulgated in the 1980s remain effective and continue to be enforced. Such regulations reflect current EPA policy and should thus be considered current despite the date of their original publication.

In contrast, some information becomes obsolete and irrelevant after only a month. For example, a Web page that promotes an upcoming event that month will contain obsolete information as soon as the event is over.

With the fast-paced growth of EPA's public access Web site, effective management of information is essential. It is important to distinguish information that is *current* from what is *outdated, but still useful*. Otherwise, it can be difficult for people to locate the information they are most interested in accessing, or to determine what information accurately describes current EPA policy decisions and activities. Similarly, EPA's Web site search engine should not inundate users with obsolete information.

4. **DEFINITIONS.** The terms, **content owner** and **data owner**, refer to the EPA staff person who develops, manages and maintains a Web page or Web area, and is intimately familiar with the information documents, and/or databases that are posted in that Web area. The content or data owner of a particular Web area is also generally the content expert for the topics covered in that Web area.

Current information refers to information that reflects current EPA policy, regulations, programmatic activities and responsibilities.

Old [or dated] information means information that was created in the past, in some cases, many years ago, but that still reflects current EPA decisions and/or activities. (Also see "Current information" above.) Such information has not been superseded by policy decisions, data or other materials released at a later date, and in the case of regulatory requirements, is still legally enforced. (Examples: RCRA Revision Checklist 59: Hazardous Waste Miscellaneous Units, 54 FR 615-617, promulgated on January 9, 1989, and Effluent Guideline for Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Point Source Category, 48 FR, 49821, promulgated on October 27, 1983.)

Dead or broken link refers to an inactive link to a uniform resource locator (URL) (i.e., Web site), through the link's retirement, change of address, or server error.

Information is a communication or representation of knowledge such as facts or opinions in any medium or form, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative or audiovisual forms. Examples include Web page text, images and links, as well as information available online and/or in hardcopy, including databases, models, reports, studies, memoranda, correspondence and other documents. "EPA information," for the purpose of this Order, is defined as that information which is gathered or maintained by EPA, or information obtained from other sources for which EPA accepts a stewardship role.

Obsolete information means information that no longer reflects current EPA policy, responsibilities and programmatic activities, AND IS NOT useful or relevant to the public. Most of this information includes ephemeral information about short-lived announcements and activities.

Orphan Web site refers to those sites or areas of the EPA public access Web site that are no longer maintained and/or no longer linked to other pages.

Outdated information means information that no longer reflects current EPA policy, responsibilities and programmatic activities, but that is still useful to the public as reference or background information. It includes regulations, guidance and policies that are no longer used or enforced, or that have been superseded by more recently released decisions. Such information often provides invaluable historical context to current decisions, requirements and activities. For purposes of this policy, such information is not considered to be obsolete or useless.

5. **POLICY**. EPA is committed to maintaining and refreshing current information on the Agency's Web site, while continuing to provide access to historical information that is of interest to EPA's stakeholders and the public. This policy establishes criteria for the following categories of information:

- a. Current and old information that still reflects EPA decisions and activities, regardless of its age,
- b. Outdated information that can be updated,
- c. Outdated information that cannot be updated, but is still useful and should be maintained on the public access Web site for reference purposes, and
- d. Obsolete information that is no longer useful to the public and should be permanently removed from the public access Web site.

See the Definitions section above regarding the definition of terms such as "current," "old," "outdated" and "obsolete" information.

It is easy to confuse the requirements and implications of this policy with record keeping requirements, as well as Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requirements. These issues, which must be kept separate, are addressed in sections 8 and 9 below.

In order to implement this policy, program and regional office directors will be held responsible for periodically assessing the currency, relevancy and accessibility of the information they manage on the Agency Web site. (See section 10 below.)

(1) Current and old information that still reflects current EPA decisions and activities – Regardless of when the information was originally created and published, it might still reflect current policy decisions and activities and have lasting value. There are many years-old regulations, policies and programmatic descriptions posted on the Web site that are still accurate and have not been superseded by more recent information. All such information posted on the Web site must be dated using the original publication or release date, as described in section VII. below. This type of information should not be labeled and treated as outdated.

(2) Outdated information that can be updated – Outdated information on the Web site that can be updated to accurately reflect the Agency's most recent policy decisions, programs or activities, should be revised and posted. It is up to each office to determine which information can, and should, be revised. After it has been updated and posted, it should be regularly reviewed for its relevance and usefulness to the public. (Recommended time frame for revising outdated

information that can be updated: as soon as possible but no longer than **a month** after it is discovered.)

(3) Outdated information that cannot be updated but is still useful to the public – A large amount of outdated but valuable information cannot be updated, but should be maintained on the public access Web site for reference and background purposes. Some of this information may pertain to activities that have been completed or closed out, or information that has been superseded. It may also be information that reflects past policy decisions that have since changed, but that need to be made available to the public to provide context for newer policy decisions. In all these cases it is important to notify the public that the information no longer reflects current EPA decisions or activities. Therefore, content owners must label the information as outdated with a standardized notice and graphic icon explaining that it is no longer current and is provided for reference purposes only. (See section 5 How to label outdated information that cannot be updated but is still useful to the public with a notice and icon below.)

A. Useful, outdated information that should be maintained on the EPA public access Web site and labeled as no longer current – include the following:

- i. Regulations, guidance and policies that are no longer in effect and/or have been superseded, but that still provide context to more recent legislation or policy determinations. Research and other materials directly related to these outdated regulations, policies, etc., are also included in this category. Recommended time frame for content owners to apply the notice and icon: within **a month** after such information becomes outdated.
- ii. Proposed regulations, as well as draft and proposed guidance and policies for which a final version has been released, and thus, are not of themselves in force, but provide valuable historical information. Recommended time frame for content owners to apply the notice and icon: within **a month** after a final version becomes effective.
- iii. Technical documents, research studies, models, databases or other information that are no longer current, but are useful as reference resources. Recommended time frame for content owners to apply the notice and icon: as soon as possible but no longer than **three months** after they are no longer current, accurate and/or in effect.

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iv. Information about EPA projects, programs and activities that are no longer active, or that have been completed or suspended, but have helped define programmatic decisions, policies, etc. and are still useful to maintain for reference purposes. This includes “orphan Web sites” (see Definitions section above) that are important to maintain for reference purposes about past Agency activities. Recommended time frame for content owners to apply the notice and icon: within **six months** after they are completed or suspended.

v. Materials from conferences, symposiums, workshops, seminars and meetings, such as agendas, lists of session participants, session presentation materials, papers, and other relevant documents that are still useful to maintain for reference purposes. Such materials should be periodically reviewed for their relevance and usefulness to the public. Recommended time frame for content owners to apply the notice and icon: within **a month** after conclusion of the event. *(Please note that announcement notices posted prior to conferences, symposiums, etc., including information about registration, lodging, travel and other logistics, should be permanently removed from the Web site within a month after the session has concluded; see (4)A.1. below.)*

vi. Other miscellaneous types of outdated information not included in the groups above. Recommended time frame for content owners to apply the notice and icon: within **a month** after the information is no longer current, accurate and/or in effect.

B. Exemption for time sensitive information – The following materials that are inherently time sensitive and are clearly marked with a release date do not need to be labeled with an outdated information notice:

- (1) Speeches, testimony and transcripts by EPA senior managers.
- (2) Press releases and other news items which are maintained on the public access server for historical background purposes.
- (3) Materials that carry a date of issue and are produced periodically to describe or summarize program activities, including annual reports, progress reports, and newsletters.

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The public is likely to realize that the materials listed above reflect EPA's decisions and activities at a specific point in time and that the Agency's decisions and activities may change in the future.

(4) Obsolete information that is no longer useful to the public – should be permanently deleted from the EPA public access Web site. Some obsolete information may still be useful to maintain for internal reference purposes, and should be maintained on the Agency's intranet site. (See section (4) B. below.)

There is no need to maintain obsolete information on the public access Web site even if it is determined to be a record (i.e., a copy of an official record). Record keeping obligations are fulfilled through the official copy in the record keeping system. (See section 8 below.) Content owners may wish to preserve some information that has outlived its usefulness to the public, but that is still relevant to Agency employees, on the Agency's intranet site. (See section (4) B. below.) Using the examples provided below, each office is responsible for determining which information is no longer useful and should thus be permanently removed from the EPA public access Web site.

A. Obsolete information includes, but is not limited, to the following:

1. Announcements, brochures, logistics and other non-substantive material about meetings, conferences or other events that have concluded (e.g., registration, travel arrangements, lodging, directions). Recommended removal time frame: as soon as possible but no longer than **a month** after they are no longer current, accurate and/or in effect.
2. Announcements for programmatic deadlines that have passed (e.g., grant opportunities, public comment periods). Recommended removal time frame: as soon as possible but no longer than **a month** after deadline.
3. Public comments for non-regulatory activities that have already been addressed. Recommended removal time frame: **three months** after the final decision has been made or activity has been completed.
4. Information posted on the EPA homepage and on various top pages under "Recent Additions" or other similar categories. Recommended time frame for deleting such information from the "Recent Additions" or similar category on the Agency's main

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homepage: **three months** after the date they were posted. Recommended time frame for deleting such information from the “Recent Additions” or similar category on various program and regional offices’ top pages: **six months** after the date they were posted. (There may be instances in which program and regional offices need to display information under “Recent Additions” for a relatively long period of time, such as displaying certain information affecting childrens’ health several months prior to and after the beginning of the school year.)

5. Information that is marked with a “new” icon. After such information has been posted for one month it should no longer be considered “new” and the icon should be removed. Recommended time frame for removing the “new” icon: **a month** after such information was originally posted.

6. News items, clips, etc. about Agency activities that are no longer relevant or useful to the general public. Recommended removal time frame: **a month** after the date they were posted on the Web site.

7. Information about long-term activities, projects and programs, as well as publications, reports, and data, that content owners and managers determine to be no longer useful or relevant to the public. Recommended removal time frame: as soon as possible after it is discovered, but no longer than **three** months.

8. “Orphan Web sites” (see the Definitions section above) that are no longer useful to the public and/or have no historical value. Recommended removal time frame: **immediately** upon discovery.

9. “Dead or broken links” (see the Definitions section above), as well as links that take the viewer to obsolete, irrelevant information. Recommended removal time frame: **immediately** upon discovery.

B. Obsolete information to post and maintain on the Agency’s intranet site – Some information that has outlived its usefulness to the public may still be relevant to Agency employees. Content owners should use their judgment to determine if obsolete information removed from the public access Web site should be posted on the EPA intranet site. All obsolete information posted on the intranet should be labeled at the top of each

page, with a notice stating it is obsolete information that is being maintained on the intranet for reference purposes only.

HOW TO HANDLE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PREVIOUSLY POSTED INFORMATION

IF THE INFORMATION IS...	AND IT...	THEN IT IS...	AND YOU SHOULD...	USING...
still relevant to the public	reflects current EPA decisions and/or activities	<i>old</i>	leave it alone	Section (1) above
still relevant to the public	can be updated	<i>outdated</i>	update and re-post it on the public access Web site	Section (2) above
still relevant to the public	cannot be updated	<i>outdated</i>	leave it on the public access Web site but label it with a the standard notice and icon	Sections (3) above and (5) below
no longer relevant to the public	cannot be updated	<i>obsolete</i>	remove it from the public access Web site (if it still useful for internal purposes, consider moving it to EPA's intranet)	Section (4) above

(5). How to label outdated information that cannot be updated but is still useful to the public with a notice and icon – EPA content owners must clearly label all outdated information maintained on the Web site to help users distinguish it from current information. A graphic icon and standardized notice (“**EPA no longer updates this information, but it may be useful as a reference or resource**”) have been developed to label outdated but still useful information. Instructions for displaying it at the top of relevant pages, as well as sample pages and coding details are provided at <http://www.epa.gov/epafiles/outdatedpages.htm>.

A. Links to outdated Agency information – When a Web page with current information includes a link to outdated EPA information, display the appropriate icon to the right of the link. See the sections in the EPA Web Guide regarding this smaller sized “link icon” at <http://www.epa.gov/epafiles/outdatedpages.htm>. When the link is to an Agency maintained area, the notice and full-size icon should be displayed

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at the top of the linked area's home page. (Hint: the small icon goes with links to pages that are labeled using the large icon.)

B. Labeling outdated information in different electronic formats – All outdated Web pages, documents and databases, except those produced in PDF format, must be labeled with the outdated information notice and graphic icon. This includes documents, such as memos, letters, reports, studies, etc. produced in HTML format. Even outdated sub-pages, linked pages and materials buried several layers below an outdated top page should be labeled so that they can be identified as no longer current if a viewer locates them, for example, directly through a search engine. (See the guidance in the Web Guide under Documents/EPA Orders and Memoranda at <http://www.epa.gov/epafiles/outdatedpages.htm> for more detailed information regarding how to label and tag such outdated information in order to comply with the Look and Feel Policy.) **Do not assume that visitors will see higher-level pages and associated labels.**

Due to technological difficulties associated with inserting graphics into old PDF files, all outdated documents produced in PDF format will be exempt from displaying the outdated information graphic icon. Outdated PDF files are NOT EXEMPT from displaying the outdated notice *text*. Each outdated PDF document should clearly display the outdated information notice text at the top of the first page of the document.

C. Exemption from EPA's Look and Feel Policy for outdated information – All outdated information on the public access Web site that is properly labeled with the outdated information notice is exempt from the Agency Look and Feel Policy. See <http://www.epa.gov/epafiles/outdatedpages.htm> for detailed instructions regarding application of the notice. See <http://www.epa.gov/webguide/docs/epaweb.html> for further information about the EPA Look and Feel Policy.

(6). Ranking which pages to label first – Due to resource constraints, it may be difficult to label all outdated pages immediately. Therefore, the first several layers or top Web pages should be labeled first. Information determined to be “influential” as described in the Agency's Information Quality Guidelines (See <http://www.epa.gov/oei/qualityguidelines>), as well as important scientific and/or

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technical information, should be given priority in deciding which information to label first. If outdated information is maintained in a separate archive location, the top archive page should be labeled first. While all of the individual pages maintained in the archive should be labeled, rank the order in which to label them according to the instructions above.

(7). Date stamping – In order to adequately inform the public about various Agency decisions and activities, data owners must ensure that all information placed on the Web site displays the date when the decision or activity originally became effective. For example, in order to understand the historical significance of a particular requirement or decision, one needs to know what period of time it was in place. Data owners should add the appropriate signature and effective date to all new documents, including policy directives, regulations, guidance, reports, memos, letters, etc. Outdated documents and databases, if not previously dated, should be dated retrospectively as resources allow.

(8). Record keeping and outdated information – In order for information in any format to be considered a record, it must meet the definition of a Federal record [44 U.S.C. Section 3301]. (See www.epa.gov/records/ for more information.) A record can be made available to the public in various formats (i.e., hard copy document, video, email, Web page, Web site portal, etc.). Web pages and materials posted on EPA's Web site are often available in other formats, particularly in hard copy. Information that is designated as a record, regardless of format, must be maintained in a record keeping system and retained in accordance with the applicable records schedule (See intranet.epa.gov/records/schedule to review schedules). If an electronic record keeping system is not in use for the storage of official electronic records, the record must be printed and filed in a paper record keeping system. (The Agency is in the process of developing a content management system that will provide electronic record keeping capabilities.)

Program and regional offices are responsible for ensuring that records are maintained in accordance with EPA's records schedules. According to current EPA records management requirements, information posted on the Web site that is already contained in an office record keeping system should be managed in accordance with programmatic needs and the principles in this policy. Such information does not rely on the Web copy to meet records management requirements and the Web copy may be deleted prior to the scheduled record keeping date of disposal. However, in order to comply with the Agency's records management program (see Chapter 10 of the Information Resources Management Policy Manual, EPA Directive 2100 – <http://www.epa.gov/irmpoli8/polman/chaptr10.htm>), once an official record is

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disposed of in accordance with its record schedule, all copies of the information should be disposed of as well. Thus, all duplicate information posted on the Web site should be removed upon the same scheduled disposal date as the official record.

This Order is in compliance with Agency records management policies. -The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is currently developing guidance on managing Web records. Record keeping policies and guidance referenced here are subject to change during the life of this policy directive. For further information about record keeping requirements, see www.epa.gov/records/.

(9). Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and outdated information - The FOIA requires that final Agency opinions and orders, statements of Agency policy and interpretations, Agency staff manuals, and other records be made available in electronic format. It is EPA's policy to disseminate these records to the general public through the Agency's public access Web site. Such records should be maintained and removed from the public access Web site in accordance with EPA's record retention policies.

For more information about FOIA and E-FOIA, go to <http://www.epa.gov/foia/>.

(10). Periodic review of outdated information – In order to enhance the public's access to timely, current information, program and regional offices are expected to regularly review and update as appropriate all outdated Web pages, documents, and databases maintained on the Web site and follow the procedures discussed above. Program and regional offices will be held responsible for performing this type of Web site management **once a year**.

6. **Roles and Responsibilities.** The Chief Information Officer/Assistant Administrator, Office of Environmental Information, and the Associate Administrator for Public Affairs are jointly responsible for monitoring compliance with this Order.

Office Directors in each EPA program office and equivalent managers reporting directly to the Regional Administrator in the regions are responsible for ensuring compliance with this Order, particularly for ensuring that a review of outdated Web pages, documents and databases is conducted at least once a year.

Staff level content owners and managers are responsible for ensuring that any content they manage and/or maintain on the public access server complies with this Order.

7. **Authorities.** The Information Technology Reform Act of 1996, Pub. L. 104106, established the position of Chief Information Officer in federal agencies in place of the designated senior official for information resources management previously established by the Paperwork Reduction Act. This provision establishes clear accountability for

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agency information resources management activities, provides for greater coordination among the agency's information activities, and ensures greater visibility of such activities within each agency.

Electronic Freedom of Information Amendments of 1996 (E-FOIA) mandate that agencies make all reasonable efforts to provide information to requesters in the medium of their choice (hard copies, electronic data, CDs, etc.).

8. **Related Documents.** Web Guide (<http://www.epa.gov/webguide/>)
Records Management Web site (<http://www.epa.gov/records/>)
FOIA Web site (<http://www.epa.gov/foia/>)

Memorandum of Understanding between the Offices of Public Affairs and Environmental Information, "Management and Oversight Responsibilities for EPA's Web Site," November 8, 2002
(<http://intranet.epa.gov/webgroup/memos/OPAEOEIMOU.pdf>)
9. **Recertification Date.** Three years from date issued.
10. **Additional Information.** For further information about this policy, please contact the Chief of the Policy and Program Management Branch, Office of Information Analysis and Access, 202-566-0668.